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AUTHOR	Cannella, Gaile Sloan
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ABSTRACT

Some early childhood educators have proposed that the knowledge base used to inform the early education field actually serves to support the status quo, reinforces prejudices and stereotypes, and ignores the real lives of children. The purpose of this book is to deconstruct early childhood education, identifying and evaluating the themes and forms of discourse that have dominated the field, leading to the construction of specific theories and forms of practice that privilege particular groups of children and adults while oppressing others. The first theme is the construction of "childhood" as a form of existence that is separate and distinct from "adulthood." This concept of childhood is examined by conducting a genealogy of childhood (chapter 2), analyzing the hidden assumptions underlying the official child development text (chapter 3), and identifying the dominant themes that privilege early experience as the determiner of life (chapter 4). The second theme, the construction of the field of early childhood education, is explored, problematizing our stories of institutionalized early education and care (chapter 5), examining child-centered, play-based perspectives (chapter 6), and exploring the professionalization of early childhood education and education in general as an instrument for the regulation of women and children (chapter 7). An alternative avenue for early childhood education is posited that focuses on social justice and human agency (chapter 8). Contains approximately 300 references. (KB)

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